United Nations A/67/PV.97

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

97th plenary meeting
Thursday, 29 August 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (A/67/936)

Draft resolution (A/67/936, para.79)

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered, in a joint debate, agenda item 115 and agenda item 116 at its 23rd plenary meeting, on 11 October 2012.

We have gathered this afternoon to review the deliberations and endorse the findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. During the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Ad Hoc Working Group has been ably chaired by my good friend, His Excellency Ambassador Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil, Permanent Representative of Egypt, one of the most skilful diplomats with whom I have ever had the privilege of working. At the outset of my remarks, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to him and his colleagues for their dedication in the endeavour to enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

The report (A/67/936) of the Working Group summarizes the results of the six sessions that were held over the past few months. Substantive discussions were divided into two parts, namely, a general debate and exchange of views, followed by a series of meetings that addressed a number of specific issues, organized around four thematic clusters defined by the Chair.

The first focused on the role and authority of the General Assembly and its relationship with the other principal organs of the United Nations, as well as other groups and organizations outside the United Nations system. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of making better use of the Assembly's vast prerogatives under the Charter of the United Nations, especially as they relate to establishing greater complementarity with the Security Council on matters related to peacekeeping, and with the Economic and Social Council on advancing the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The Working Group also underscored the importance of deepening the relationship with informal intergovernmental groupings, in part based on the provisions contained in landmark resolution 67/289, adopted by consensus on 9 July and entitled "The United Nations in global economic governance". By establishing the General Assembly as the pre-eminent venue for regularized interaction among the Group of 20 and other States Members of the United Nations, the foundation has been laid upon which coordination on global economic, financial and trade issues can be built up in the time ahead.

The second cluster of topics that was taken up by the Working Group related to significant technical matters, such as working methods, the implementation of resolutions and agenda streamlining, in addition to

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

13-46090 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

the consideration of options for more time-conscious and secure balloting in the plenary and in the Main Committees, including the selection of committee chairs. Attention was also paid to the question of thematic debates. I welcome the fact that paragraph 7 of the draft resolution on revitalization contained in paragraph 79 of document A/67/936

> "Recognizes the value of holding interactive inclusive thematic debates on current issues of critical importance to the international community, and invites the President of the General Assembly to continue this practice".

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to Member States for having participated in such high numbers in such events during the sixty-seventh session. I believe each of them has helped to advance the process of revitalization, thereby demonstrating the singular convening power of the General Assembly. Key subjects included, among others, the role of international criminal tribunals in reconciliation; the United Nations in global economic governance; the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa; sustainable development and climate change, culture and development; entrepreneurship for development; education for youth; and inequality.

In less than a fortnight, I will convene the final thematic debate of the sixty-seventh session, on the role of credit-rating agencies in the international financial system. The occasion will provide the General Assembly with an unprecedented opportunity to engage with leading international experts, academics, senior executives of the agencies themselves, as well as other financial entities. We will be able to take stock of the reform measures already undertaken and discuss additional ones it may be necessary to implement in order to establish a more objective and reliable rating system that can benefit the international community as a whole.

The third cluster of issues that fell under the purview of the Working Group revolved around a consideration of the role and responsibility of the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads in the United Nations system. As the Group's report underscores, a more inclusive and transparent process involving the General Assembly at earlier stages, mindful of the terms set out in Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting resolution 11 (I) as well as other relevant documents, would enable the entire membership to be apprised of the views of perspective candidates for the position of Secretary-General, thus helping them to make informed choices and provide timely feedback to the other principal organs of the United Nations.

The fourth cluster included an examination of the functions of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. That included how to strengthen its institutional memory, conduct a more effective transition between term-holders, enhance its relationship with the Secretariat, develop options on how to increase the number of permanent staff assigned to the Office and address the manifest inadequacy of the budgetary apportionment, which has not increased since 1998.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Member States that have contributed to the Trust Fund in support of the Office of the President of the General Assembly since its establishment, in March 2010. That, however, should not be seen as an optimal solution to the chronic underfunding of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. I would therefore like to extend an appeal to the General Assembly to consider raising the allotment for the Office, in the context of the forthcoming deliberations on the Organization's regular budget.

I strongly believe that, in deciding whether to contend for the post of the President of the General Assembly, no country should be constrained by the possible financial implications of a successful candidacy, and respectfully urge the Assembly to take appropriate action to level the fiscal playing field among Member States.

We have taken a number of steps in revitalizing the world's sole universal body that operates on the basis of sovereign equality. I believe we should invest additional efforts in that endeavour with all deliberate speed. We should aim to further empower the General Assembly by ensuring that the best possible use is made of its broad prerogatives, as provided by the Charter of the United Nations. We must strive to reform the way the Assembly conducts its work so that it may come to play a leading role in twenty-first century global governance, one in which the advantages of effective multilateralism, framed by adherence to the accepted principles and norms in the conduct of international relations, are respected by all.

In 1945, the General Assembly was created to serve as the moral conscience of the international community.

It was established as the democratic repository of the rights of all nations — large and small, developing and developed — to live in peace, security and prosperity. For decades, the great promise made by the United Nations founders has now been fulfilled in its entirety.

A growing number of countries are coming together in their belief that a more effective, transparent and inclusive Assembly is an imperative for the twenty-first century. Revitalization, in my view, holds the key to enabling this institution to set the agenda for a world that is in the midst of a profound, strategic and environmental transformation, as the complex challenges that we now face cannot be solved in isolation from one another.

A little over a year ago, world leaders tasked the General Assembly with the primary responsibility for conceptualizing a universal transition to sustainability. Whether it succeeds or fails will represent, in my view, a strategic litmus test of whether or not the revitalization of the General Assembly can be completed with the requisite boldness and foresight necessary for it to assume its rightful place at the helm of world affairs.

In September 1963, one of the greatest statesmen of the twentieth century, United States President John F. Kennedy, stepped up to the podium of the General Assembly for the second and final time, a mere two months before he was tragically assassinated in Dallas. He said,

> "My fellow inhabitants of this planet ..." (*A/PV.1209, p. 7*);
>
> "The effort to improve the conditions of man ... is not a task for the few. It is the task of all nations ... [f]or plague and pestilence, plunder and pollution, the hazards of nature and the hunger of children are the foes of every nation. The Earth, the sea and the air are the concern of every nation. And science, technology and education can be the allies of every nation" (*ibid., p. 6*)
>
> "Never before has man had such capacity to control his own environment: to end thirst and hunger; to conquer poverty and disease; to banish illiteracy and massive human misery".

He concluded,

> "Let us complete what we have started..." (*ibid., p. 7*);
>
> "[for] I believe the problems of human destiny are not beyond the reach of human beings." (*supra*)

I believe we should draw inspiration from those words and the vision they have come to embody. As we look ahead to the many steps that still need to be taken — on revitalization and so much else — let us remember that the Organization was founded not simply to prevent a slide backwards into unconscionable warfare, but also to strengthen the bonds of trust among States and peoples.

As we come to a point at which such a welcoming horizon of possibility comes into view, let us be moved to action, as President Kennedy was, by the belief in the ingenuity of humankind to overcome the obstacles they themselves have set on the path to the creation of a better world, one in which scarcity, hardship and privation are seen not as a fate that we must accept, but as a challenge that this determined generation can overcome by truly coming together in a common cause.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution contained in paragraph 79 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly", contained in paragraph 79 of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution contained in paragraph 79 of document A/67/936 was adopted (resolution 67/297).

The President: I should like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil, Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group, who so ably conducted the discussions and complex negotiations of the Working Group. That is an official note of recognition, as I myself thanked him earlier. I really think that he did a tremendous job. I want to thank him wholeheartedly for his hard work and the endeavour by him and his team. I very much hope that this is going to be continued and built upon in his work during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 116?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 117 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly held a debate on this item at its thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth plenary meetings, on 15 November 2012. Members will also recall that, pursuant to decision 66/566, of 13 September 2012, the Assembly continued intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary meetings during the current session.

In a letter dated 14 August 2013, I circulated for consideration by Member States language for an oral decision on this important issue.

May I now take it that the General Assembly decides:

"To reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly on the question of equitable representation on and an increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council;

"To immediately continue intergovernmental negotiations and Security Council reform and in an informal plenary of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, as mandated by General Assembly decisions 62/557 of 15 September 2008, 63/565 of 14 September 2009, 64/568 of 13 September 2010, 65/554 of 12 September 2011 and 66/566 of 13 September 2012, building on the informal meetings held during its sixty-seventh session, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States; while welcoming the active engagement, initiatives and intensive efforts of the President of the General Assembly, and taking note of the previous proposals of the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, and noting with appreciation his active role and concrete efforts, including the preparation of the text reflecting the positions of and proposals submitted by Member States, with a view towards an early comprehensive reform of the Security Council;

"To convene the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, if Member States so decide; and

"To include in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly an item entitled 'Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council'"?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan for chairing the negotiations on my behalf, and for doing so impartially as to the positions and yet in a manner partial to progress.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 117?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.